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Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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Supplement No. 35 (A/57/35)

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Contents

Chapter		Paragraphs	Page
	Letter of transmittal		iv
I.	Introduction	1–6	1
II.	Mandate of the Committee	7–10	3
III.	Organization of work	11–15	5
	A. Membership and officers	11–13	5
	B. Participation in the work of the Committee	14–15	5
IV.	Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine	16–31	6
V.	Action taken by the Committee	32–78	13
	A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/33	32–59	13
	1. Action in the General Assembly and the Security Council	33–54	13
	2. Communications to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council	55–56	16
	3. Statements by the Committee	57	17
	4. Participation by the Chairman of the Committee at international conferences and meetings	58–59	17
	B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 56/33 and 56/34	60–78	17
	1. United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace	64	18
	2. United Nations NGO Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinian People	65	18
	3. United Nations African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People	66	18
	4. United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People	67–68	19
	5. Cooperation with civil society	69–72	19
	6. Research, monitoring and publications	73–74	20
	7. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine	75	21
	8. Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority	76	21
	9. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People	77–78	21
VI.	Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/35	79–92	22
VII.	Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee	93–98	25

Letter of transmittal

10 October 2002

Mr. Secretary-General,

In 1975, the General Assembly established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and mandated it to work towards the realization by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights — the right to self-determination without external interference; the right to national independence and sovereignty; and the right to return to their homes and property. In the 27 years that have passed since, the Committee, through its various activities, has continued to work tirelessly to help achieve this goal.

In the course of the past year, I have shared with you, the General Assembly, the Security Council, as well as with various international gatherings the growing concern of the Committee over the distressing events in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and the vast humanitarian disaster facing the Palestinian people. Regrettably, violence, destruction and human suffering have not ended. The situation remains extremely tense and volatile. The Palestinian people have lived under the occupation for far too long. The continuing Israeli occupation remains the core of the conflict and must come to an end.

The Committee has repeatedly called for concerted efforts by all aimed at stopping the escalation of the conflict. Our position is that the international community cannot afford to stand idle in the face of this tragedy. Steps to revive the political process are urgently needed. We, in the Committee, welcome and highly appreciate the work done by the Quartet, as well as your personal close involvement in the peace efforts. The Committee will continue to support you in your mission of peace.

In the hope that the work of our Committee will make a constructive contribution to the deliberations of the General Assembly, I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 5 of its resolution 56/33 of 3 December 2001. The report covers the period from 11 October 2001 to 10 October 2002.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Papa Louis **Fall**
Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the
Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan
Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Chapter I
Introduction

1. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly by resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, with the task of recommending a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights as recognized by the Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.

2. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report to the General Assembly[1] were endorsed by the Assembly as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports,[2] the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination. The Committee's recommendations could not be implemented, and the Assembly each year renewed the Committee's mandate and requested it to intensify efforts in pursuit of its objectives.

3. The Committee welcomed the historic breakthrough in the peace process in 1993 and the subsequent important steps towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). At the same time, the Committee continued to work towards the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and to its own independent State. The Committee also continued to mobilize international assistance for and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

4. The year under review was characterized by the continuation of the Al-Aqsa intifada in opposition to the Israeli occupation. Since the start of the intifada, thousands of Palestinians, including women and children, had been killed and wounded by the Israeli army. The occupation continued to bring misery and suffering to the Palestinian people. The Committee reiterated its grave concern at the destructive effects of the Israeli military campaigns on the livelihood of the Palestinian people. Also, the Israeli actions dealt a severe blow to the capacity of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions to function, and have devastated the Palestinian economy. Reoccupation by the Israeli forces of areas under full Palestinian control, recurrent incursions of the army into Palestinian population centres, including refugee camps, the demolition of houses, tight internal and external closures, curfews and other restrictions, including those imposed on international agencies and donor missions, have caused tremendous suffering to the Palestinian people, resulting in a humanitarian crisis. The full scale of the physical destruction of the Palestinian infrastructure perpetrated in the course of this military onslaught is yet to be assessed by the international community. The Committee was much perturbed by the tragedy that unfolded during the two-week-long operation in Jenin, by the massive Israeli attack on the Palestinian Authority headquarters in Ramallah and the virtual house arrest of Chairman Arafat, and by the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. As the crisis escalated, the Security Council

acted by adopting a series of resolutions, namely resolutions 1402 (2002), 1403 (2002), 1405 (2002) and 1435 (2002), seeking a cessation of violence and efforts at resuming the peace process. In spite of the worldwide criticism of its actions, Israel has shown disrespect for its obligations under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 (the Fourth Geneva Convention),[3] international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions. The Committee reaffirmed the applicability of the Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and called upon the occupying Power to fully and effectively respect its provisions.

5. Continuing violence over the year left virtually no room for the resumption of a meaningful political dialogue between the parties. At the same time, a number of significant political developments took place. The Committee strongly supported the objective, outlined by the President of the United States of America and subsequently affirmed in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. The Committee viewed the Beirut Summit peace initiative as an important contribution by Arab States to the overall peace efforts. The Committee welcomed the sustained peacemaking efforts by the diplomatic "Quartet", composed of the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations, aimed at putting an end to violence and bringing the two sides back to the negotiating table. The Committee also noted the greater involvement in the issue on the part of the Security Council. During the year, a broad consensus emerged on the need to address the question of security in parallel with steps in the political, economic and humanitarian areas.

6. The Committee remained hopeful that the international community would intervene as a matter of great urgency in order to help the parties restore normality, return to the political process and move forward towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002) and the fundamental principle of "land for peace". As the organ of the General Assembly mandated to deal with the question of Palestine, the Committee continued to support all initiatives aimed at resolving the question of Palestine in all its aspects until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized.

Chapter II
Mandate of the Committee

7. The mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was again renewed by the General Assembly in resolution 56/33 of 3 December 2001, in which the Assembly, inter alia: (a) endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee[4] and requested it to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate; (b) authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and thereafter; and (c) requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation and support to Palestinian and other civil society organizations in order to mobilize international solidarity and support for the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and for a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

8. In its resolution 56/34 of 3 December 2001, on the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources and to ensure that it continues to carry out its programme of work as detailed in the relevant earlier resolutions, including, in particular, the organization of meetings in various regions with the participation of all sectors of the international community, the further development and expansion of the documents collection of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine, the preparation and widest possible dissemination of publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine, and the provision of the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority. The Assembly also requested Member States to continue to give the widest possible publicity to the observance, on 29 November, of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and requested the Committee and the Division to continue to organize, as part of the observance, an annual exhibit on Palestinian rights in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations.

9. In its resolution 56/35 of 3 December 2001, on the special information programme on the question of Palestine, the General Assembly requested the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme for the biennium 2002-2003, including the preparation and dissemination of publications; expansion, continuation of production and preservation of audio-visual material on the question of Palestine; organization of international, regional and national seminars or encounters for journalists; and assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development.

10. In carrying out its programme of work, the Committee also took into account General Assembly resolution 56/36 of 3 December 2001, in which the Assembly, inter alia, reaffirmed the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine in all its aspects; expressed its full support for the ongoing peace process; stressed the necessity for commitment to the principle of land for peace and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973),

which form the basis of the Middle East peace process; and stressed the need for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination; the need for the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967; and the need for resolving the problem of the Palestine refugees.

Chapter III
Organization of work

A. Membership and officers

11. The Committee is composed of the following Member States: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

12. At its 262nd meeting, on 12 February 2002, the Committee re-elected Mr. Papa Louis Fall (Senegal) as Chairman, and re-elected Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) and Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chairmen, and Mr. Walter Balzan (Malta) as its Rapporteur.

13. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted its programme of work for the year 2002.[5]

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

14. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members of and permanent observers to the United Nations wishing to participate in the work of the Committee as observers were welcome to do so. In accordance with established practice, Palestine participated in the work of the Committee as an observer, attended all its meetings and made observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee and its Bureau.

15. In 2002, the Committee again welcomed as observers all the States and organizations that had participated in its work in the preceding year.[6]

Chapter IV
Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine

16. In pursuance of its mandate, the Committee continued to keep under review the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, as well as the relevant political developments. The year was marked by an unprecedented intensification of the Israeli military activity, reoccupation by the army of areas under full Palestinian control, disintegration of the Palestinian economy, and as a result, a burgeoning humanitarian crisis. The number of Palestinians killed and injured since the start of the intifada in late September 2000 has steadily increased. Over 1,800 Palestinians have lost their lives and more than 37,000 have been injured, of whom some 2,500 have been left with permanent disabilities. The number of deaths of children under 18 has exceeded 300.

17. During the year, the Committee has observed with growing concern the steady escalation and expansion of the geographic scope of Israeli military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In this period, the focus of Israeli actions moved to areas under full Palestinian control. The Committee was much troubled by the extensive use of armour, attack aircraft, air-to-surface and other types of high-yield ordnance, and the use of the particularly deadly "flechette" munitions in areas of dense civilian presence, which resulted in a heavy death toll among innocent civilians and caused irreparable damage to the Palestinian infrastructure. The army and special units continued to carry out extrajudicial assassinations of Palestinian activists. The international community was profoundly disturbed by reports of the Israeli army practising the so-called "neighbour procedure", whereby Palestinian civilians were used as human shields in army search operations during incursions. In reaction to these illegal actions, the Committee joined the international community in calling upon Israel to stop such practices and respect the principles of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the provisions of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

18. As the intensity of the Israeli military activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to increase and the humanitarian situation rapidly deteriorated, the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention convened a Conference on 5 December 2001, focusing on the applicability of the Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. At the conclusion of the Conference the High Contracting Parties approved a Declaration, in which, inter alia, they deplored the great number of civilian victims due to the indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force and the lack of respect for international humanitarian law; reaffirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; recalled the obligations of all concerned, as well as the specific obligations of the occupying Power; expressed their support for the endeavours of humanitarian organizations and United Nations bodies and took note of their reports and recommendations; and encouraged the resumption of negotiations with a view to finding a just and lasting peace. The Committee, for its part, stressed the importance for the High Contracting Parties to respect their obligations under the Convention.

19. Last year, the Committee in its report to the General Assembly indicated its concern over what it described as "an emerging pattern of Israeli military incursions into areas under full Palestinian control".[7] Since October 2001, these incursions have become systematic. Until March 2002, Israel had been concentrating its attacks

on the Palestinian Authority infrastructure. Scores of Palestinian Authority facilities, such as security installations, administrative buildings, the Gaza International Airport and the seaport had been seriously damaged, with many of them completely destroyed. However, in late March 2002, Israel further scaled up its military actions by launching "Operation Defensive Shield". Following a series of incursions, the Israeli army reoccupied almost all the major Palestinian cities, refugee camps and many Palestinian villages in the West Bank. That operation marked the beginning of a massive targeting of the Palestinian civilian infrastructure. Nablus, Jenin and Ramallah were damaged the most. By some accounts, a total of 497 Palestinians were killed in the course of the reoccupation of Area "A" from 1 March to 7 May 2002 and in the immediate aftermath, and 1,447 persons wounded. In response to the deterioration of the situation on the ground, the Security Council adopted resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002), calling for a meaningful ceasefire and withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities, including Ramallah. In Ramallah, the target of the military offensive was the Palestinian Authority infrastructure, including the muqataa, headquarters of Chairman Arafat. The international community was outraged by a month-long siege of the compound, its further destruction in September 2002 and the threat these actions posed to Chairman Arafat's personal safety and his ability to exercise political leadership. The Security Council expressed serious concern for the safety of Chairman Arafat, and called for the lifting of the siege and for a non-violent resolution of the situation around his headquarters in Ramallah.[8] The 39-day military siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem — one of the holiest Christian sites — also raised wide-ranging international criticism of the occupation forces. In June 2002, the Israeli army launched "Operation Determined Path", in the course of which Israel reoccupied seven West Bank cities and seized security control through sweeping arrests of suspected militants and their relatives, house demolitions, a tight regime of internal and external closures and stringent on-and-off curfews, stifling the movement of people and goods and the work of the international humanitarian agencies.

20. Israel's massive operation in the Jenin refugee camp has brought vast devastation and untold suffering to some 14,000 refugees. The camp sustained a very high death and injury toll, exacerbated by extensive property damage. Events in the Jenin camp resulted in international condemnation of the Israeli actions and led, on 19 April 2002, to the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1405 (2002), in which the Council, inter alia, welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to develop accurate information regarding events in the Jenin refugee camp through a fact-finding team. On 22 April 2002, the Secretary-General established a fact-finding team headed by Mr. Marti Ahtisaari of Finland. However, Israel failed to cooperate with the team. As a consequence, the team was not able to prepare a balanced and thorough report without the full cooperation of the Government of Israel. As such cooperation had not been forthcoming, the Secretary-General decided to disband the fact-finding team. The seventh resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, which ensued, took note of the report of the Secretary-General and, in resolution ES-10/10 of 7 May 2002, requested him to present a report on the events. The report was subsequently issued on 30 July 2002 without a visit to Jenin (A/ES-10/186). The Assembly, at the eighth resumption of the emergency special session, considered the report of the Secretary-General on the events in Jenin and in other Palestinian cities. The Committee was

appalled by the lack of cooperation on the part of Israel and regretted the fact that the events in Jenin could not be thoroughly investigated.

21. Months of Israeli military operations, a high death and injury toll among the civilian population, protracted closures, curfews and other forms of restriction of movement, heavy infrastructural and institutional damage inflicted on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, have ravaged the Palestinian economy and led to a humanitarian emergency. Physical damage resulting from the Israeli incursions of March-April 2002 alone was estimated at US$ 361 million. In Nablus, many of the historic old town buildings, including a mosque, were destroyed. In Ramallah, many of the Palestinian Authority ministries were damaged beyond repair, with their offices left ransacked. In some cases, irreplaceable civilian records and documents were destroyed or lost. Instances of looting of Palestinian property by Israeli forces were reported. Road, electricity and water networks sustained significant damage. The Palestinian private sector has suffered substantial losses as well. Over the year, the Palestinian economic activity in all sectors sharply declined. Internal and external closures and rolling curfews had a most debilitating impact on the Palestinian economy. For most of the summer of 2002, between 500,000 and 900,000 Palestinians were under curfew. These harsh forms of collective punishment have led, in particular, to a rapid loss of income and an upsurge in the levels of unemployment and poverty. Daily Palestinian income losses were estimated at some $7.6 million. Since the start of the current intifada, overall income losses have been estimated at $3.3 billion. The unemployment rate rose from 11 per cent in the third quarter of 2000 to 78 per cent in the second quarter of 2002. In the absence of alternative sources of income, the number of Palestinians living below the poverty line rose dramatically and reached 70 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 55 per cent in the West Bank. The productive sectors of the Palestinian economy, such as agriculture, industry, commerce and tourism, were practically obliterated. In addition, Israel should return in full the VAT and customs revenues it owes to the Palestinian Authority. To be able to maintain its operations, the Palestinian Authority is forced to rely on external aid.

22. The military offensive was accompanied by a methodical destruction of Palestinian housing and property, which left a great number of families homeless and caused considerable internal displacement of the population. Serious concern was expressed by international agencies for the health situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory caused by the military actions. More than half of the Palestinians were forced to decrease food consumption because of a lack of income and military curfews. Malnutrition among Palestinian children under 5 reached emergency levels and ranked among the highest in the world. Some 22.5 per cent of Palestinian children suffered from acute or chronic malnutrition. Because of the magnitude of the problem, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and others have organized emergency food aid to the malnourished Palestinian families, including Palestine refugees. In the course of the military actions, the Israeli forces often hindered the work of humanitarian teams and medical crews. Such deliberate attacks on medical personnel, ambulances and infrastructure constituted a grave breach by the occupying Power of international humanitarian law. In the light of the dire humanitarian situation, the Committee welcomed the appointment by the Secretary-General and dispatch to the region of his Personal Humanitarian Envoy, Ms. Catherine Bertini, with the mandate to assess the nature and the scale of the

humanitarian crisis facing the civilian population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

23. In early September 2002, Israel's High Court of Justice approved the forcible transfer from Nablus to the Gaza Strip for a period of two years of Kifah and Intisar Ajuri — family members of a Palestinian accused of organizing attacks against Israel and assassinated by the Israeli forces. The Committee was greatly disquieted by this arbitrary action and believes that it contravened international humanitarian law and resolutions of the United Nations. The Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits this form of collective punishment by the occupying Power.

24. Throughout the year, the Committee observed with growing concern attempts by the Government of Israel to establish a physical barrier between Israel and the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem. The plan envisages the construction of an approximately 225-mile-long "security fence", running along the Green Line, equipped with multiple obstacles, surveillance outposts and electronic sensors. The army and the border police intend to patrol the barrier on both sides. Construction has already begun on a first 71-mile stretch, which would run mostly east of the Green Line from the northern tip of the West Bank to settlement blocks south of Qalqilya. Moreover, in many places, the barrier would cut well into the Palestinian territory in order to protect Jewish settlements. The separation line approved by the Israeli security cabinet would put at least six settlements inside the Occupied Palestinian Territory, off limits to Palestinians. The Israeli Government was also considering the creation of what it called the "Seam Line plan" or the "Jerusalem envelope"— a wall separating the city from the West Bank. Moreover, it was reported that the barrier would be erected south of Rachel's Tomb. The position of the Committee has always been that matters pertaining to the delineation of boundaries between the two sides belonged in the permanent status negotiations. Therefore, the Committee opposed all Israeli schemes aimed at creating artificial boundaries. Such actions are illegal and predetermine the outcome of any future negotiations on permanent status issues.

25. Violence and extremely high levels of tension on the ground have considerably complicated attempts by various parties to restore political contacts between the two sides and gradually resuscitate the peace process. Despite the largely disappointing lack of progress in peacemaking efforts, some international moves aimed at helping the parties resume a political process have been undertaken in this period. The Committee welcomed a landmark statement made before the General Assembly on 10 November 2001 by the President of the United States, in which he presented a vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living peacefully together within secure and recognized borders. This statement was received throughout the world with hope that concrete steps would follow. As the crisis on the ground continued to worsen, the issue was brought before the Security Council, which on 12 March 2002 adopted resolution 1397 (2002), affirming the objective outlined in the statement of the United States President. The Committee strongly supported this action by the Council and considered the resolution to be as fundamental and significant as were resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). An important next step was taken in late March 2002 by the League of Arab States, which, at its summit in Beirut, adopted a plan for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the principle of land for peace (A/56/1026-S/2002/932). The initiative endorsed an earlier proposal by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, expressing the readiness of the Arab States to establish normal relations with Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from all

territories occupied since 1967. The Committee was much encouraged by the strong commitment of the Quartet to help the parties move away from violence and confrontation and restart meaningful negotiations. In this connection, the Committee considered the three-phase plan outlined in the Quartet communiqué of 17 September 2002 an important step in the right direction. Ideas for resolving the conflict through convening an international peace conference, drawing up a road map towards a final settlement, have also been broached over the year, including by the Quartet. The Committee supported the United Nations Secretary-General's close involvement in all stages of the peace efforts. The Palestinian leadership's readiness to develop and implement a comprehensive plan of political and economic reforms and hold elections early in 2003 was welcomed and supported by the international community. At the same time, the Committee firmly believed that such reforms should only be carried out by the Palestinian people themselves without external interference. In the past year, the Committee took note of the increased engagement of the Security Council on matters relevant to the question of Palestine, especially in response to the various developments on the ground. Having welcomed the stepped-up action by the Council, the Committee, however, was disappointed by the fact that the Council had been stymied in its ability to follow up on its own resolutions, most notably concerning events in the Jenin refugee camp.

26. Illegal settlement and road construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, continued. Between February 2001 and March 2002, 34 new settlements and outposts were established in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. Although the Israeli Defence Ministry announced in late July 2002 that 19 outposts had been evacuated, 8 new ones were reported established during August 2002. Most of the new settlement sites are located some 700 yards or more from existing settlements, with some as much as a mile away. By mid-May 2002, 957 tenders had been issued for new construction in the settlements of "Efrat", "Beitar Ilit", "Ma'ale Adumim", "Geva Binyamin" and "Har Adar". Settlement and bypass road construction was in progress or in various planning stages in several East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, such as Ras al-Amud, Jabal al-Mukabbar, Sheikh Jarrah, Jabal Abu Ghneim and Musrarra. Construction of bypass roads, linking West Bank settlements with each other and with the Israel road network, was an important part of the settlement activity. As of May 2002, nine such roads were under construction, at a total cost of $50 million. Five more roads were scheduled for construction. The settlement activity continued to receive support from the Knesset. In November 2001, the Knesset approved $13 million for the construction of roads in the occupied West Bank. In March, the Knesset Finance Committee approved $29 million for settlement projects, including $25 million to subsidize home purchases and "manufacturing activities", $2.4 million to repair water networks at the "Itamar", "Kiryat Arba" and "Yitzhar" settlements and $1 million to renovate some of the 1,000 Government-owned caravans located in settlements. A total of 41.9 per cent of the West Bank area is controlled by settlements. The Committee remains of the view that the Israeli settlement activity dangerously changes the status quo, predetermines the outcome of the permanent status negotiations and is a major obstacle to peace.

27. Throughout the year, attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians persisted. Groups of armed settlers, often protected by Israeli soldiers, used their firearms and continued to assault Palestinians, including children. The settler tactics includes the destruction, vandalizing or forceful takeovers of Palestinian houses,

setting up roadblocks to disrupt Palestinian traffic, shooting at roof-top water heaters, setting cars on fire, smashing windows, destroying crops and uprooting trees, and harassing merchants. The Committee felt strongly that the presence of the settlers constituted a serious violation of international humanitarian law, in particular article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

28. The Committee was greatly concerned over the situation with regard to Palestinian prisoners. Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada, some 15,000 Palestinians have been arrested by the Israeli authorities. As of late July 2002, approximately 5,000 Palestinian and Arab prisoners were held in 21 Israeli detention facilities. During its military operations, the Israeli forces have routinely rounded up, arbitrarily arrested and detained, without charge for varying periods of time, large numbers of Palestinians between the ages of 15 and 45. During interrogation, many of the detainees were deprived of adequate shelter, food and water before being either released or transferred to detention facilities. Palestinian prisoners are kept in severely overcrowded jails, often exposed to extremes of temperature with inadequate nutrition and poor hygiene and sanitation conditions, which fail to meet minimum international standards of conditions of detention, including those specified in article 85 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Access to medical care is also unsatisfactory. Juvenile detainees are often not informed of their legal rights. A number of restrictions, making attorney or family visits virtually impossible, have been put in place. Palestinian minors are at times confined with Israeli criminals, which may pose a physical danger and cause a serious psychological trauma. The Committee was particularly distressed by reports of the continued use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees.

29. The unfair division of water resources between the Israelis and Palestinians has created a severe water shortage in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This chronic problem has been compounded by the Israeli army incursions and closures. The Palestinian water supply infrastructure has been disrupted or destroyed. Pipelines, including the ones used for agricultural needs, private roof-top water tanks, water wells, pumps, meters and other equipment have been badly damaged by the Israeli forces. Lack of funds in Palestinian municipalities has resulted in their inability to purchase fuel for water pumps. In addition, settlers have disrupted water supplies by closing water valves. The plight of some 200,000 Palestinians who do not have access to a water network and rely mostly on rainfall remains especially difficult. The water they use is of extremely poor quality and has a detrimental effect on their health, in particular on the most vulnerable population group — children, women and the elderly.

30. The Israeli military offensives in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have had a profoundly negative impact on UNRWA and its ability to provide assistance to Palestine refugees. The Committee noted with gratitude and appreciation that, despite the extremely difficult situation on the ground, the Agency managed to continue its emergency humanitarian assistance to more than 3.9 million refugees. Because of closures and restrictions on movement, UNRWA's food deliveries to the poorest of the refugees were greatly hampered. International donations for humanitarian aid had to be spent on storing that aid in Israeli ports rather than distributing it to the needy. In addition, the military operations resulted in a wholesale destruction of shelters, water supplies, electricity lines and the sewage system. The Agency made it clear that the refugees needed the support of the international community. In January 2002, UNRWA launched an appeal to cover its

needs for the whole year. However, in the light of the rapid deterioration of the situation, in March and April, it was forced to ask the international community for additional financial assistance in the form of a supplementary appeal. In its various activities in the course of the year, the Committee has consistently supported the vitally important work carried out by UNRWA, calling upon the international community to continue to provide financial assistance to the Agency.

31. The Committee was also grateful to the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP/PAPP), which carried on its humanitarian and developmental aid in the difficult circumstances of the present crisis. During the year, UNDP/PAPP dispatched convoys with various supplies to Palestinian cities, villages and refugee camps. It also assisted sister United Nations agencies, such as UNRWA, with transportation and staff, greatly facilitating their work. The United Nations Volunteers programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territory also made an important contribution by responding to the crisis in many Palestinian communities devastated by the military activity. The Committee is of the view that the work carried out by UNDP/PAPP remains central to providing emergency humanitarian relief and improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people.

Chapter V
Action taken by the Committee

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/33

32. In pursuance of its mandate and in response to the difficulties experienced by the peace process and in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, the Committee continued to mobilize the international community in support of the Palestinian people, in cooperation with United Nations bodies, Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and others, as indicated below.

1. Action in the General Assembly and the Security Council

(a) Resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly

33. Since October 2001, the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly has convened three times (sixth, seventh and eighth resumptions) to discuss the deteriorating situation on the ground under the item entitled "Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

34. On 20 December 2001, the emergency special session was resumed at the request of the Permanent Representative of Egypt, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of December 2001 (A/ES-10/130), and the Permanent Representative of South Africa, in his capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (A/ES-10/131). The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement (see A/ES-10/PV.15). At the end of the debate, on 20 December 2001, the General Assembly adopted resolutions ES-10/8 and ES-10/9.

35. On 7 May 2002, the session was resumed at the request of the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Sudan, in his capacity as Chairman of Group of Arab States for the month of May 2002 (A/ES-10/170), and the Permanent Representative of South Africa, in his capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (A/ES-10/171). The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement (see A/ES-10/PV.16). At the conclusion of the debate, on 7 May 2002, the General Assembly adopted resolution ES-10/10.

36. On 5 August 2002, the session was resumed at the request of the Permanent Representative of Oman, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of August 2002 (A/ES-10/187), and the Permanent Representative of South Africa, in his capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (A/ES-10/188). The General Assembly discussed the report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/10 on the events in Jenin and in other Palestinian cities in the period from the beginning of March to 7 May 2002. The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement (see A/ES-10/PV.16). At the conclusion of the debate, on the same day, the General Assembly adopted resolution ES-10/11.

(b) Security Council meetings

37. During the year, against the backdrop of the rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground, the Security Council has been involved in finding ways to defuse the crisis. The Council held numerous informal consultations and public meetings under agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". The action by the Security Council in that regard is briefly described below.

38. On 25 October 2001, following informal consultations of the Security Council, the President of the Council issued a press statement on the situation in the Middle East (SC/7188).

39. On 14 December 2001, the Security Council met at the request of the Permanent Representative of Egypt, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of December 2001 (S/2001/1191). The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement. At its 4438th meeting, the Council voted on a draft resolution submitted by Egypt and Tunisia (S/2001/1199). The draft received 12 votes in favour, and 1 against, with 2 abstentions. The draft resolution was not adopted owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council (S/PV.4438).

40. At the request of the Permanent Representative of Yemen, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of February 2002 (S/2002/184), and the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations (S/2002/182), the Security Council met on 21, 26 and 27 February 2002 (S/PV.4474 and S/PV.4478 and Resumption 1). The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement (see S/PV.4478).

41. On 12 March 2002, the Security Council met again and, at its 4489th meeting, adopted resolution 1397 (2002). In the preamble to the resolution, the Council, inter alia, affirmed a vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, would live side by side within secure and recognized borders. The Council demanded the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction; called upon the Israeli and Palestinian sides and their leaders to cooperate in the implementation of the Tenet work plan and Mitchell Report recommendations with the aim of resuming negotiations on a political settlement; expressed support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and others to assist the parties to halt the violence and to resume the peace process; and decided to remain seized of the matter (S/PV.4488 and S/PV.4489).

42. At the request of the Permanent Representative of Jordan, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of March 2002 (S/2002/329), and the Permanent Representative of Qatar (S/2002/331), the Security Council resumed its consideration of the agenda item. At its 4503rd meeting, on 30 March 2002, the Council adopted resolution 1402 (2002), in which it called upon both parties to move immediately to a meaningful ceasefire, called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities, including Ramallah and called upon the parties to cooperate fully with Special Envoy Zinni, and others, to implement the Tenet security work plan as a first step towards implementation of the Mitchell Committee recommendations, with the aim of resuming negotiations on a political settlement; reiterated its demand in resolution 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002 for an immediate cessation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement

and destruction; expressed support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the special envoys to the Middle East to assist the parties to halt the violence and to resume the peace process; and decided to remain seized of the matter (see S/PV.4503).

43. At the request of the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of April 2002 (S/2002/336), and the Permanent Representative of South Africa, in his capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (S/2002/342), the Security Council met on 3 and 4 April 2002. At its 4506th meeting, on 4 April 2002, the Council adopted resolution 1403 (2002), in which, inter alia, it demanded the implementation of its resolution 1402 (2002) without delay (see S/PV.4506 and Resumptions 1 and 2).

44. In the light of the further deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and following its consultations on 7 April 2002, the President of the Security Council issued a press statement outlining the position of the Council in that regard.[9]

45. At the request of the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of April 2002 (S/2002/359), the Security Council met on 8, 9 and 10 April (S/PV.4509, S/PV.4510 and Resumption 1 and S/PV.4511). At the 4511th meeting, on 10 April, in connection with the Council's consideration of the aforementioned item, the President of the Security Council made a statement on behalf of the Council. The presidential statement was subsequently issued as a document of the Council (S/PRST/2002/9), the annex to which contained the text of a joint Statement made by the Quartet at Madrid on the same day.

46. On 18 and 19 April 2002, at the request of the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of April 2002 (S/2002/431), the Security Council resumed its consideration of the agenda item. At its 4516th meeting, on 19 April, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1405 (2002), in which it emphasized the urgency of access of medical and humanitarian organizations to the Palestinian civilian population; welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to develop accurate information regarding recent events in the Jenin refugee camp through a fact-finding team and requested him to keep the Security Council informed; and decided to remain seized of the matter (see S/PV.4515, S/PV.4516 and Resumption 1).

47. On 25 and 28 April 2002, the President of the Security Council issued press statements in connection with developments on the ground.[10]

48. The Security Council met again on 3 May 2002 at the request of the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of May 2002 (S/2002/510). The Vice-Chairman of the Committee (Afghanistan) took part in the debate and made a statement (S/PV.4525 and Resumption 1).

49. At the request of the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of June 2002 (S/2002/655), the Security Council, on 13 June 2002, resumed its consideration of the agenda item. The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement (S/PV.4552 and Resumption 1).

50. Following the 4556th (closed) meeting of the Security Council on 20 June 2002, a statement on the situation in the region made at the meeting by the Secretary-General was made public (the full electronic version of text can be found at the United Nations News Centre web site, at www.un.org/News).

51. At the 4578th meeting of the Security Council, held on 18 July 2002, the President of the Council made a statement on behalf of the Council (S/PRST/2002/20).

52. On 24 July 2002, at the request of the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of July 2002 (S/2002/828), the Security Council met to consider agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". The Vice-Chairman of the Committee (Cuba) took part in the debate and made a statement (see S/PV.4588).

53. In view of the dramatic worsening of the situation around the headquarters of the President of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, its reoccupation and the further demolition of the compound by the Israeli army, the Security Council met on 23 and 24 September 2002, in response to the request of the Permanent Observer of Palestine, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of September 2002 (S/2002/1055), and the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2002/1056), and resumed its consideration of the agenda item. The Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and made a statement (see S/PV.4614, Resumption 1). At its 4614th meeting, on 24 September 2002, the Council adopted resolution 1435 (2002), in which it reiterated its demand for the complete cessation of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction; demanded that Israel immediately cease measures in and around Ramallah, including the destruction of Palestinian civilian and security infrastructure; demanded also the expeditious withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from Palestinian cities towards the return to the positions held prior to September 2000; called on the Palestinian Authority to meet its expressed commitment to ensure that those responsible for terrorist acts were brought to justice by it; expressed its full support for the efforts of the Quartet and called upon the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and all States in the region to cooperate with those efforts and recognized in that context the continuing importance of the initiative endorsed at the Arab League Beirut Summit; and decided to remain seized of the matter.

54. On 27 September 2002, the President of the Security Council issued a press statement calling for the full implementation of resolution 1435 (2002) (SC/7516).

2. Communications to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

55. In the course of the year, the Chairman of the Committee continued to bring to the attention of the Secretary-General the Committee's concerns over the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem (A/ES-10/120-S/2001/1000, A/ES-10/127-S/2001/1147, A/ES-10/153-S/2002/234 and A/ES-10/191-S/2002/933).

56. On 23 April 2002, the Chairman of the Committee addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council concerning the list of items of which the Council was seized (S/2002/477).

3. Statements by the Committee

57. On 5 April and 15 May 2002, in reaction to events on the ground, the Bureau of the Committee made statements that were issued as press releases (GA/PAL/879 and GA/PAL/889, respectively).

4. Participation by the Chairman of the Committee at international conferences and meetings

58. During the year, the Chairman of the Committee participated in meetings of intergovernmental bodies relevant to the question of Palestine and contributed to their deliberations in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as follows:

(a) Seventy-fifth session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity/African Union, Addis Ababa, 9-15 March 2002;

(b) Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, Durban, South Africa, 27-29 April 2002;

(c) Seventy-sixth Session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity/African Union and 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Durban, South Africa, 4-10 July 2002.

59. As in previous years, the Committee continued to follow the activities relevant to the question of Palestine of other intergovernmental organizations, as well as decisions and resolutions of United Nations bodies and agencies.

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 56/33 and 56/34

60. In its programme of meetings in the various regions, the Committee continued to give priority to promoting the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, supporting the peace process and stressing the need for the timely and scrupulous implementation by the parties of the bilateral agreements. The Committee also urged the international community to continue to provide political support as well as economic assistance to the Palestinian people.

61. On the basis of the provision contained in General Assembly resolution 56/33, the Committee adjusted its programme of work, as necessary, in order to meet the evolving situation in the most effective and constructive manner, while keeping in mind the continuing financial constraints facing the Organization. The Committee expressed its great appreciation to the Governments of Cyprus and Morocco for having provided venues and facilities for events sponsored by the Committee.

62. During the year, the Committee, through its Bureau, continued to maintain its cooperation on the question of Palestine with States members of the European Union (EU). In March 2002, the Bureau held a useful meeting of consultations with representatives of EU (under the Presidency of Spain) as part of the continued effort to build a constructive relationship with EU members on issues of common concern. In accordance with established practice, the Chairman of the Committee briefed the members of the EU delegation on the Committee's ongoing activities and explained

the position of the Committee with regard to the situation on the ground, the stalemate in the peace process and the state of the Palestinian economy. He expressed the hope that the two sides would continue consultations.

63. Throughout the year, the staff of the Division for Palestinian Rights met at United Nations Headquarters, as well as away from Headquarters with members of the general public and briefed them on the various aspects of the question of Palestine and the involvement of the United Nations in this issue.

1. United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace

64. The United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace was held at Nicosia on 16 and 17 April 2002. The participants discussed the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since September 2000, international efforts at containing the crisis and resuming the peace dialogue, as well as the urgency of ending the Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian State. Three Palestinian speakers invited from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to address the Meeting were unable to travel to Nicosia due to the general closure imposed by Israel. The Committee delegation at the Meeting issued a statement, expressing its utmost concern and denouncing the Israeli policy of closures and other forms of collective punishment of the Palestinian people. The Meeting adopted the Nicosia Declaration, highlighting the main points of the discussion. In the course of the Meeting, the Committee delegation was received by Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, both of whom stressed the importance of supporting peace in the Middle East at the current extremely difficult stage and welcomed the efforts of the Committee in that regard.

2. United Nations NGO Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinian People

65. The United Nations NGO Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinian People was held at Nicosia on 18 April 2002. The participants reviewed the role of civil society in time of crisis and action by international civil society in support of the Palestinian people. At the end of the Meeting, they adopted an NGO Statement and a Plan of Action. Participating NGOs also conveyed an urgent appeal to the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace that had been held prior to the NGO Meeting. Due to the Israeli closure of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, a number of Palestinian NGO representatives were unable to attend the Meeting.

3. United Nations African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

66. The United Nations African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was held at Rabat from 24 to 26 June 2002. The theme of the African Meeting was "Achieving the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — a key to peace in the Middle East". The participants discussed the impact of the Israeli military offensive in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem; the challenges to a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine; and international efforts at salvaging the peace in the Middle East and African support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Meeting included a workshop for African NGOs, which considered possible action by civil society in Africa in

solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Chairman of the Committee deplored the absence of an invited Palestinian NGO speaker due to curfews imposed by Israel in a number of Palestinian cities. For the same reason, numerous Palestinian NGO representatives had been prevented from travelling to Rabat. The main points of the deliberations were highlighted in the Final Communiqué. Participating NGOs adopted a Plan of Action. The Committee delegation was granted an audience with His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco.

4. United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People

67. The United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 23 and 24 September 2002. The theme of the Conference was "End the Occupation!". The participants discussed the various aspects of life under occupation, in particular the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and civil society action to oppose the occupation. The Conference concluded with the participants adopting an NGO Declaration and a Plan of Action.

68. All the aforementioned events were attended by representatives of Governments, Palestine, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, entities of the United Nations system, as well as experts, media representatives, academics and students. The reports of the meetings were issued as publications of the Division for Palestinian Rights and were made available through UNISPAL and the Division's web site.

5. Cooperation with civil society

69. The Committee continued and strengthened its cooperation with NGOs, academic institutions, parliamentarians and media representatives. Representatives of civil society participated in all meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee, including the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November. The Committee commended civil society organizations for the many initiatives and activities organized worldwide in support of the Palestinian people. The Committee highly appreciated the work of those NGOs that provided emergency relief at a difficult time for the Palestinian people. It noted the courage and activism of those NGO volunteers who, through their physical presence in Palestinian cities and villages under military siege, had demonstrated solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Committee stressed that there was a greater need for sustained campaigns aimed at informing public opinion about the root causes of the conflict and the legitimate rights of the parties and promoting national and international action in support of the peace process, the effective implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, and of a just and lasting peace in the region. The Committee was of the view that, given the tense and highly volatile situation on the ground, special attention should be given to mobilizing wide support for measures to protect the Palestinian people.

70. The Committee maintained and developed its liaison with national, regional and international coordinating mechanisms accredited to it, in addition to the already established liaison with a large number of individual NGOs. The Committee also reviewed the entitlements and responsibilities of the accredited and observer NGOs and formulated new guidelines in that regard. The Chairman of the

Committee and members of Committee delegations in Nicosia and Rabat met with groups of NGOs and individual representatives in order to discuss specific activities in support of the Palestinian people. The United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People provided ample opportunity for discussions on the future of cooperation between the Committee and civil society.

71. The Committee continued to develop its liaison with national and regional parliaments and their organizations. Of particular significance in that regard was the United Nations African Meeting in Support of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, where members of the Palestinian Council, among them its Secretary-General, an Arab Israeli Knesset member, the Vice-President of the National Assembly of Senegal and the Secretary-General of the African Inter-Parliamentary Union discussed ways and means of furthering the role and contribution of national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations in shaping public opinion and formulating policy guidelines.

72. The Division for Palestinian Rights maintained and continued to develop its Internet web site entitled "NGO Network on the Question of Palestine" as a permanent tool of mutual information and cooperation between civil society and the Committee. The web site can be found at: www.un.org/depts/dpa/ngo. The Division also continued to issue its bimonthly newsletter entitled *NGO Action News* covering the activities of civil society on the various aspects of the question of Palestine.

6. Research, monitoring and publications

73. The Committee continued to attach great importance to the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights in support of its mandate and implementation of its annual programme of work. The Committee requested the Division to continue its established programme of work, including studies, information notes and other publications; the further development of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL); the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority; and the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

74. Accordingly, the Division continued to respond to requests for information and briefings on the question of Palestine, and to prepare for dissemination, including through UNISPAL, the following publications:

(a) Monthly bulletin covering action by the Committee, United Nations bodies and agencies, and intergovernmental organizations concerned with the question of Palestine;

(b) Monthly chronology of events relating to the question of Palestine, based on media reports and other sources;

(c) Reports of meetings organized under the auspices of the Committee;

(d) Special bulletin on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

(e) Annual compilation of relevant resolutions, decisions and statements of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine;

(f) Two updated information notes entitled "The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and The Division for Palestinian

Rights" and "The United Nations and non-governmental organizations on the question of Palestine".

7. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

75. The Division for Palestinian Rights, in cooperation with relevant technical and library services of the United Nations Secretariat, continued to maintain and develop UNISPAL, as mandated by the General Assembly since 1991. This included the required ongoing upgrading of the system's technical components to ensure its uninterrupted presence on the Internet under the United Nations home page and expansion of the documents collection with relevant new and old documents. In particular, initial steps were taken to enhance the user-friendliness of the system. This exercise involved redesigning the UNISPAL user interface and simplifying the user's access to the UNISPAL collection and related external documents, including the non-English-language versions of some United Nations documents.

8. Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority

76. Two staff members from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of the Palestinian Authority participated in a training programme conducted by the Division, from September to December 2001, in conjunction with the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. They familiarized themselves with various aspects of the work of the United Nations Secretariat and other organs. The programme included, among other things, attendance at various briefings and meetings of relevant committees and bodies of the United Nations, meetings with representatives of delegations to the General Assembly, staff of permanent missions to the United Nations, and of the Secretariat. The trainees also conducted research and prepared studies on specific topics.

9. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

77. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed, on 29 November 2001, at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. However, due to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the enhanced security measures in New York and at Headquarters, the traditional Palestinian exhibit could not be organized. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day of Solidarity had also been observed in many other cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

78. In adopting its programme of work, the Committee decided that a similar observance of the International Day of Solidarity should be organized in 2002.

Chapter VI

Action taken by the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/35

79. The Department of Public Information, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 56/35 of 3 December 2001, continued to implement its special information programme on the question of Palestine. Activities carried out from August to July 2002 included the organization of its annual training programme for Palestinian media practitioners at United Nations Headquarters, and the organization of an international media seminar on the question of peace in the Middle East in Copenhagen. Work on the digital conversion of films and videotapes on the question of Palestine also began during the year.

80. The Radio Section provided extensive coverage of various aspects of the question of Palestine and related issues in its daily live broadcasts in all six official languages of the United Nations. The Middle East Radio Unit continued to cover all the relevant issues in its daily live 15-minute broadcast in Arabic.

81. The United Nations Information Service in Geneva produced radio and television programmes covering the discussions on the question of Palestine at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights, which were sent to United Nations Radio in New York and to radio and television stations around the world. Significant quantities of audio material in Arabic, English and French were transmitted to *Palestine Radio*. When their facilities in the West Bank were rendered non-operational, the audio material was transmitted to the Palestine Broadcasting Corporation in Gaza. Audio materials were also offered to *Kol Israel Radio* in Jerusalem.

82. The Department revised and updated its booklet on the question of Palestine entitled "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations", incorporating information on recent political and other developments.

83. The various aspects of the question of Palestine continued to be covered by the Department's quarterly magazine *UN Chronicle*. In the course of the year, the magazine reported on relevant action taken by the General Assembly, the Security Council and entities of the United Nations system.

84. In October-December 2001, the Department held its annual training programme for Palestinian media practitioners at United Nations Headquarters. Nine Palestinian broadcasters and journalists took part.

85. The question of peace in the Middle East was the subject of the International Media Seminar on the Question of Peace in the Middle East organized by the Department on 17 and 18 July 2002 in Copenhagen. The event, co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, brought together present and former policy makers from Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the European Union, as well as senior United Nations officials, international experts and representatives of the world media. With the overall theme "Ending confrontation: Building peace in the Middle East", the Seminar provided an opportunity for media representatives and international experts to discuss the lessons learned since the signing in 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The participants discussed issues that continued to divide the Israelis and the Palestinians and the role of third parties,

especially the United Nations, in restoring confidence and building trust. A separate session was devoted to discussing the role of the media as a partner for peace.

86. The Department's Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued its cooperation with the Division for Palestinian Rights on digitizing relevant United Nations documents on the question of Palestine to expand the UNISPAL collection.

87. The Department, in cooperation with the Committee, has undertaken a project involving the conversion and remastering of United Nations films and videos on the question of Palestine covering the period 1947-2000.

88. As part of their regular activities, the United Nations information centres (UNICs) and services (UNIS) disseminated information on the situation in the Middle East in general, and on Palestine in particular. Press releases, op-ed pieces, statements, documents, audio-visual material, reports and studies were brought to the attention of target audiences, posted on web sites and made available to the visitors to the reference libraries maintained by these offices.

89. In connection with the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, UNIS Geneva produced nine press releases in English and French on the question of Palestine. In addition, it produced one press release on the work and annual visit of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and seven in English and five in French on different statements by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It also organized briefings for delegations, NGOs and journalists with the Special Rapporteur.

90. In April-May 2002, UNIS Geneva provided full support to the spokesperson and other members of the Jenin Fact-Finding Team established by the Secretary-General in accordance with Security Council resolution 1405 (2002).

91. UNICs worldwide carried out numerous activities in connection with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (29 November 2001). The Director of UNIC Athens delivered a speech at the Chamber of Commerce of Piraeus. UNIC Cairo, together with the United Nations Association of Egypt, held a ceremony attended by representatives of the League of Arab States, ministries, the diplomatic corps, NGOs and educational institutions. UNIS Geneva, in collaboration with the Office of the Director-General, organized a special commemorative event involving members of civil society. UNIC Dhaka and the United Nations Association of Bangladesh held a seminar, at which the Acting Foreign Secretary was the guest of honour. UNIC Harare attracted 260 guests to its observance of the Day and its staff gave a radio interview. UNIC Jakarta and the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a solemn meeting and the Centre held a two-day photo exhibition entitled "United Nations and Palestine". UNIC Mexico City organized a ceremony for Foreign Ministry officials, the media and NGOs and exhibited Palestinian posters, handicrafts and historical information. UNIC Moscow co-organized a ceremony at the Press Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, attended by the acting Deputy Foreign Minister. UNIC Tunis, together with the Tunisian Journalists' Association, held a panel discussion attended by ambassadors, government officials, the media and NGOs.

92. Several UNICs reissued in local languages special features and op-ed articles written by senior United Nations officials. The op-ed article by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA entitled "The World Must Help Palestinians" was translated and

placed in a significant number of newspapers around the world. UNICs also organized press briefings/encounters for senior United Nations officials dealing with the issue. UNIC Bonn organized a press luncheon and a radio and newspaper interview in connection with the visit to Berlin of the UNRWA Commissioner-General. UNIC Cairo organized a press conference and a TV interview for the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. UNICs also undertook a number of special outreach activities aimed at broadening local knowledge about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Staff of UNIC Lisbon gave a lecture to 300 students; staff of UNIC Lomé spoke before an NGO audience; UNIC Mexico City provided a keynote speaker at a "Model UN" meeting; staff of UNIC Paris made a keynote address to an NGO conference on the Middle East; and UNIC Rome addressed a conference organized by the University of Catania. UNIC Cairo organized a media encounter on its premises and its Director gave a radio interview to *Sawt El Arab*; the Director of UNIC Mexico City gave an interview to the daily *El Universal*; the Director of UNIC Moscow was interviewed by *REN TV*; and the Director of UNIC Paris participated in a briefing on the Middle East conflict on *France 2* TV. The Director of UNIC Rome was interviewed by two local TV stations in Sicily; UNIC Tunis participated in a round-table discussion organized by the daily *Achourouq* and also delivered a speech during a two-day meeting for Arab journalists, organized by the Arab Institute for Human Rights.

Chapter VII
Conclusions and recommendations of the Committee

93. The greatest concern of the Committee since its last report to the General Assembly remained the most deplorable and increasingly dangerous situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem. The Committee was appalled by the intensity of Israeli military offensives, growing human losses among the Palestinians, the scope of devastation left by the occupying forces and the enormity of the humanitarian catastrophe that ensued. The fabric of Palestinian society has been badly damaged. Attempts to contain the violence, stabilize the situation and resolve the crisis have not been very successful. To complicate the situation, efforts at resuming a political dialogue have not produced desirable results. The Committee reiterates that the continuing Israeli occupation remains at the core of the conflict and must be addressed without further delay. At the same time, the Committee unreservedly condemns all acts of violence against civilians, from whatever quarter. It firmly believes that the solution to the question of Palestine should be achieved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and other relevant resolutions, the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, and the coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders. The Committee will continue to work towards this objective by carrying out its General Assembly mandate. Through its programme of activities, the Committee will continue to contribute to international efforts at bringing peace to the region.

94. Pending a political settlement, the parties will need assistance in steering away from escalating violence and confrontation. In this regard, a central role should be played by members of the international community, individually and collectively. The United Nations should maintain its permanent responsibility with respect to all aspects of the question of Palestine until it is resolved in a satisfactory manner, in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions, in accordance with international legitimacy, and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fully realized. The Committee is much encouraged by and fully supports the role played within the framework of the Quartet by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. Disturbed by the Israeli attacks on Palestine refugee camps run by UNRWA and by the Agency's persistent financial crisis, the Committee reiterates its call on the international donor community to help UNRWA overcome the present severe crisis in order to continue its vital humanitarian work.

95. The Committee considers that its programme of meetings in various regions continues to play a useful role in heightening international awareness of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It helps promote a constructive analysis and discussion of the various aspects of the question of Palestine and mobilize international assistance. The Committee also highly appreciates the contribution made by a large number of civil society organizations working untiringly to mobilize solidarity with the Palestinian people, provide some form of protection, as well as emergency relief under difficult circumstances to the population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and raise international awareness of the illegal occupation by Israel of Palestinian land. In addition to civil society initiatives and given the situation on the ground, special emphasis should be laid on mobilizing wide public support for measures aimed at protecting the Palestinian people, such as

action by the United Nations and the Security Council or by the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention. In its programme of work for the next year, the Committee will strive to involve to a greater extent other sectors of civil society, such as academic institutions and think tanks, parliamentarians and the media. Its cooperation with the wide network of NGOs on the question of Palestine will be intensified on the basis of the new guidelines for accredited organizations. The Committee will continue to review and assess its programme with a view to making it more responsive to developments on the ground and in the peace process. It will focus its work in the next year on the question of the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, international initiatives aimed at resolving the question of Palestine and the role of the United Nations therein, and on international assistance to the Palestinian people.

96. The Committee stresses the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat in support of the Committee's objectives and requests it to continue its programme of publications and other informational activities, including the further development of the UNISPAL documents collection. The Committee also considers that the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority has demonstrated its usefulness and requests that it be continued.

97. The Committee is of the view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and public opinion on the relevant issues. The Committee requests the programme's continuation, with the necessary flexibility, as warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

98. Wishing to make its contribution to the achievement of a just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and in view of the many difficulties facing the Palestinian people and besetting the peace process, the Committee calls upon all States to join in this endeavour and invites the General Assembly once again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate with overwhelming support.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/31/35).

[2] Ibid., *Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/32/35); ibid., *Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/33/35); ibid., *Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35* and corrigendum (A/34/35 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/35/35); ibid., *Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/36/35); ibid., *Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35* and corrigendum (A/37/35 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/38/35); ibid., *Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/39/35); ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/40/35); ibid., *Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/41/35); ibid., *Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/42/35); ibid., *Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/43/35); ibid., *Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/44/35); ibid., *Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/45/35); ibid., *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/46/35); ibid., *Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/47/35); ibid., *Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/48/35); ibid., *Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/49/35); ibid., *Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/50/35); ibid., *Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/51/35); ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/52/35); ibid., *Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/53/35); ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/54/35); ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/55/35); and ibid., *Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35* and corrigendum (A/56/35 and Corr.1).

[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35* and corrigendum (A/56/35 and Corr.1), chap. VII.

[5] A/AC.183/2002/CRP.1.

[6] The observers at the Committee meetings were: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, Yemen, League of Arab States, Organization of the Islamic Conference and Palestine.

[7] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35* and corrigendum (A/56/35 and Corr.1), para. 21.

[8] Press releases SC/7374 and SC/7378.

[9] Press release SC/7357.

[10] Press releases SC/7378 and SC/7382.

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